

November 22, 2010

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EXTRA INFORMATION

Dear Board Members:

We have been asked to give testimony to aid the Water Infrastructure Finance Commission in setting policies to assist communities with water supply and water resource protection infrastructure. A DRAFT from the Water District staff is included as a reference of their concerns from the supply side. My memo below is merely to begin a conversation from the Water Resource Protection/Public Health perspective. The intent of this memo is to stimulate ideas and considerations for us to suggest to the Commission.

Some of my proposals for BOS discussion would be:

- 1) Funding for Wastewater Management Districts-a clear statewide process for establishing districts and levels of monitoring, as well as possible sources of funding. †Extreme hardship cases that require sophisticated I/A systems should have a funding source-ie systems that will cost over \$40,000 where there is little to no opportunity for an alternative would receive financial assistance. Oversight of systems should have a funding source. Some states have proposed a small "tax" on septic systems. Collectively this is used to keep all systems properly pumped and maintained, and fund hardship cases which would fail Title V or could not meet criteria for variances.
- 2) Funding for Sewer design and infrastructure projects-funded similar to School Building Assistance Fund. State pays a certain percentage, and town pays the rest either through betterments or some other mechanism. This would bring the cost down significantly.
- 3) Stormwater- similar state aid matching grant for improving drainage and establishing Low Impact Development best practices and design for public projects. Old storm drains empty almost directly into ponds and streams. State could offer training and education to home and business owners to keep pollutants out of the run-off. Having the State of MA take control of the SW program would have significant costs savings to local communities since each community would not be duplicating efforts to meet EPA mandates.
- 4) Water supply-assistance with well development, treatment plants, pipe maintenance and replacement. Again, state percentage of cost of project would go a long way in keeping the fees on customers to manageable levels. Balancing existing community needs with new regulatory requirements will help to efficiently direct customers rates and fees to meaningful projects.

That's what I have so far. The rationale for state tax payer money to go toward this is that in the long run we save money because streams and ponds are cleaner, water doesn't need as high a level of treatment, rivers and beaches stay cleaner attracting recreation opportunities as well as tourism revenues. Quality of life is improved and property in our state has higher value. People want to live where water is clean and won't need complicated delivery systems such as Quabbin reservoir and MWRA-piping water from very far away sources. †

Recharge is improved, keeping water supplies sustainable.

Planning is critical. Regional planning for open space preservation should be undertaken to protect water resources, and concentrate infrastructure in areas that are appropriate for more dense development. Looking at long term water policies prior to communities making significant investments in infrastructure, especially wastewater and water treatment facilities will help to prevent stranded investments. This is a concern as permit conditions and limits are increasingly stringent. Investing millions of dollars today only to find out the technology is not capable of meeting new limits or you can only utilize the facility 4 months out of the year is a possibility that needs to be addressed as we talk about the financial impacts and funding.

Lauren

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